

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for making an egg based product, the method comprising: ~~blending an egg-based substance, a water-absorbent thickener, and pieces of supplemental food together to form an egg-based material, the egg-based substance comprising a natural liquid-egg component, the water-absorbent thickener distributed throughout the egg-based material, and the water-absorbent thickener effective to maintain distribution of the pieces of supplemental food throughout the egg-based material.~~

blending an egg mixture having an egg component as a major portion thereof, pieces of supplemental food, and a thickening agent that absorbs water within the egg mixture and suspends the pieces of supplemental food within the egg mixture;

cooking the mixture until the egg component coagulates so that the pieces of supplemental food are suspended within the egg mixture to form a coagulated egg mass (containing the supplemental food);

cutting the coagulated egg mass into bite size pieces;

coating the pieces with batter; and

frying the pieces in a heated fat to produce a fried egg product.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising:

~~blending the egg-based substance and the water-absorbent thickener together to form an egg-based intermediate;~~

allowing the egg-based intermediate to thicken prior to adding the supplemental food;
and

~~blending the pieces of supplemental food with the egg-based intermediate to form the egg-based material as or after the egg-based intermediate thickens.~~

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the supplemental food is selected from the group consisting of cheese, cooked egg, meat, fish, shellfish, vegetables, fruit, grain, and any of these in any combination.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the natural liquid egg component is selected from natural liquid whole egg, natural liquid egg yolk, natural liquid egg white, and any combination of any of these.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the water-absorbent thickener comprises chunks, pieces, particles, or crumbs of a cooked food product.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5 wherein the concentration of the cooked food product in the egg-based material ranges up to as much as about 25 weight percent, based on the total weight of the egg-based material.

7-8 (Withdrawn)

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the egg-based material has a fluid, flowable consistency.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein one gram of the water-absorbent thickener is capable of absorbing at least about 1.5 grams of water during a five minute absorption period when the temperature of the water ranges from about 35°F to about 70°F.

11-12 (Withdrawn)

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising incorporating a stabilizing agent into the egg-based mixture, the stabilizing agent selected from the group consisting of starch, gum, or any of these in any combination.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein the concentration of the stabilizing agent in the egg-based material ranges up to about 5 weight percent, based on the total weight of the egg-based material, and the concentration of the water-absorbent thickener in the egg-based material ranges up to about 25 weight percent, based on the total weight of the egg-based material.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1 the method further comprising incorporating a liquid dairy material into the egg-based mixture.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15 wherein the liquid dairy material is selected from whole milk, reduced-fat milk, skim milk, dairy cream, buttermilk, sour cream, yogurt, and any of these in any combination.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising heating the egg-based material sufficient to at least substantially coagulate the natural liquid egg component and transform the egg-based material into a cooked egg-based product.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the cooked egg-based product exhibits freeze/thaw stability.

19. (Canceled).

20. (Canceled).

21. (Canceled).

22. (Currently amended) A method for making an egg based product, the method comprising comprising:

blending an egg mixture having an egg component as a major portion thereof, pieces of supplemental food, and a cooked water-absorbent material that absorbs water within the egg mixture and suspends the pieces of supplemental food within the egg mixture;

cooking the mixture until the egg component coagulates so that the pieces of supplemental food are suspended within the egg mixture to form a coagulated egg mass (containing the supplemental food);

cutting the coagulated egg mass into bite size pieces;

coating the pieces with batter; and

~~frying the pieces in a heated fat to produce a fried egg product.~~

~~blending an egg-based substance and a cooked water-absorbent material together to form an egg-based material, the egg-based substance comprising a natural liquid egg component.~~

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 and wherein:

the natural liquid egg component comprises free water; and

the cooked water-absorbent material comprises bread crumbs that absorb free water of the natural liquid egg component.

24. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the cooked water-absorbent material comprises chunks, pieces, particles, or crumbs of a cooked food product..

25. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the cooked food product is selected from the group consisting of bread, cracker, cookie, tortilla, breakfast cereal, cake, and crust.

26. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein one gram of the cooked water-absorbent material is capable of absorbing at least about 1.5 grams of water during a five minute absorption period when the temperature of the water ranges from about 35°F to about 70°F.

27. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the egg-based substance further comprises a stabilizing agent, the concentration of the stabilizing agent in the egg-based material ranging up to about 5 weight percent, based on the total weight of the egg-based material, and the concentration of the cooked water-absorbent material in the egg-based material ranging up to about 25 weight percent, based on the total weight of the egg-based material.

28. (Original) The method of claim 22, the method further comprising heating the egg-based material sufficient to at least substantially coagulate the natural liquid egg component and transform the egg-based material into a cooked egg-based product.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28 wherein the cooked egg-based product exhibits freeze/thaw stability.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Currently amended) A method for making an egg based product, the method comprising:
blending an egg mixture having an egg component as a major portion thereof, a liquid
dairy material, and a thickening agent that absorbs water within the egg mixture;
cooking the mixture until the egg component coagulates;
cutting the coagulated egg mass into bite size pieces;
coating the pieces with batter; and
frying the pieces in a heated fat to produce a fried egg product.

~~blending an egg-based substance, a water absorbent material, and a liquid dairy material together to form an egg based material, the egg based substance comprising a natural liquid egg component, one gram of the cooked water absorbent material effective to absorb at least about 1.5 grams of water during a five minute absorption period when the temperature of the water ranges from about 35°F to about 70°F.~~

35. (Original) The method of claim 34 wherein the liquid dairy material is selected from whole milk, reduced-fat milk, skim milk, dairy cream, buttermilk, sour cream, yogurt, and any of these in any combination.

36. (Original) The method of claim 34 wherein the egg-based material has a fluid, flowable consistency.

37. (Canceled)

38. (Canceled)

39. (Canceled)

40. (Canceled)

41. (Canceled)

42. (Original) The method of claim 34, the method further comprising incorporating pieces of supplemental food into the egg-based material.

43. (Currently amended) A method for making an egg based product, the method comprising:
blending an egg mixture having an egg component as a major portion thereof, additional
water, and a thickening agent that absorbs water within the egg mixture;
cooking the mixture until the egg component coagulates;
cutting the coagulated egg mass into bite size pieces;
coating the pieces with batter; and
frying the pieces in a heated fat to produce a fried egg product.

~~blending an egg-based substance, a water-absorbent material, and added water together to form an egg-based material, the egg-based substance comprising a natural liquid-egg component, one gram of the water-absorbent material capable of absorbing at least about 1.5 grams of water during a five minute absorption period when the temperature of the water ranges from about 35°F to about 70°F.~~

44. (Original) The method of claim 43 wherein the egg-based material has a fluid, flowable consistency.

45. (Canceled)

46. (Currently amended) The method of claim 45-43 wherein the cooked egg-based product exhibits freeze/thaw stability.

47. (Canceled)

48. (Canceled)

49. (Canceled)

50. (Original) The method of claim 43, the method further comprising incorporating pieces of supplemental food into the egg-based material.

51. (Currently amended) A method for making an egg based product, the method comprising:
blending an egg mixture having an egg component as a major portion thereof, additional
water, and a stabilizing agent that absorbs water within the egg mixture;
cooking the mixture until the egg component coagulates;
cutting the coagulated egg mass into bite size pieces;
coating the pieces with batter; and
frying the pieces in a heated fat to produce a fried egg product.

~~blending an egg based substance, a stabilizing agent, a water absorbent material, and added water together to form an egg based material, the egg based substance comprising a natural liquid egg component.~~

52. (Original) The method of claim 51 wherein the stabilizing agent comprises starch or gum.

53. (Original) The method of claim 51 wherein one gram of the water-absorbent material is effective to absorb at least about 1.5 grams of water during a five minute absorption period when the temperature of the water ranges from about 35°F to about 70°F.

54. (Canceled).

55. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~54~~51 wherein the cooked egg-based product exhibits freeze/thaw stability.

56. (Canceled).

57. (Canceled).

58. (Canceled).

59. (Original) The method of claim 51, the method further comprising incorporating pieces of supplemental food into the egg-based material.